



## St. Andrew's United Church of Christ

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### SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 19, 2020

10:00 A.M.



**Silent Prayer for the Beginning of Worship** — Living God, for whom no door is closed, no heart is unlocked, draw us beyond our doubts until we see Christ in our presence. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## WE GATHER TO WORSHIP THE TRIUNE GOD

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Christ is risen. Hallelujah!

**He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!**

Let us open our mouths!

**That we may praise the Risen One!**

Let us open our ears!

**That we may hear of his grace!**

Let us open our hearts!

**That we may care for his world!**

Let us rejoice and be glad!

**The cross is empty!**

**The grave is empty!**

Hallelujah!

**Hallelujah!**

### SALUTATION

“Grace to you and peace from the One who is and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”

**Alleluia, Amen!**

(Revelation 1:4,5)

### GATHERING HYMN — [\*Easter version of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah\*](#)

### OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, your mighty power raised Jesus from the dead, breaking the grip of death and dissolving the terror of the grave. As we worship this day, scatter the darkness of our minds; free us from all fear and lead us to the comfort of your promise that one day we too shall dwell with Christ in the brightness of your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **WE ARE RENEWED BY THE SPIRIT**

### CALL TO CONFESSION

In spite of God's love for us and the gift of love to us, we often act in destructive and hateful ways. We close our hearts to God and disobey God's law. Together let us confess our sin.

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Lord God, we confess that we are often tempted to doubt the Good News of Easter. Like Jesus' early followers, we go to the tomb expecting to find his body. Forgive our faithless expectation! Shatter our doubt with the wonderful words: "He is risen!"**

(silent reflection)

**Gracious God, renew our trust in the risen Christ. Bring new life where we are worn and tired; new love where we have turned hard-hearted; forgiveness where we have wounded others. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND FORGIVENESS

"Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. "(1 Corinthians 15:20-22)  
Believe this gospel for Gospel, go forth and live in peace.

### GOD'S DIRECTION FOR OUR LIVES

A Dress-Down, Dress-Up passage from Colossians 3:1-17.

## **WE HEAR AND LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD**

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Old Testament—Psalm 16

New Testament — John 20:19-31

SERMON – A Word for Those Living Behind Closed Doors (see last page)

### AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Christ has died,

Christ is risen,

Christ will come again.

### HYMN OF RESPONSE

[\*The Day of Resurrection\*](#)

## WE GO FORTH TO REVEAL JESUS CHRIST IN THE WORLD

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

God of life, we rejoice in the resurrection of your Son, his defeat over death, and his gift of new life. We praise you for a reflection of that new life...(please supply your prayers).

- In creation...
- In nations and governments around the world...
- In the ministry of the church universal and St. Andrew's in Dexter...
- In our local communities...
- In the sacrifice of those who serve...
- In our new life in Christ...

To you as the giver of new life and renewed hope, we bring our prayers...

- For creation and its care...
- For the nations and leaders of the world...
- For our local communities and those who are in authority...
- For the church universal and St. Andrew's...
- For family, friends and neighbors with particular needs...

We this all in your name, the Lord and giver of life, Jesus Christ who taught us to pray:

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory forever. Amen.***

PARTING HYMN [\*In the Bulb There is a Flower\*](#)

### BENEDICTION

Go forth in joy to love and serve the Lord in all that you do. May the God of peace who raised to life the great shepherd of the sheep, make us ready to do his will in every good thing, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Alleluia! Amen!

## SERMON – A WORD FOR THOSE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Scripture: New Testament — John 20:19-31 text verse 19

How was your Easter celebration last Sunday? Those of you that I have talked with this past week have related how strange and different it was to worship at home. The absence of being together in worship without a full sanctuary, festive music and generally an up-beat mood of the congregation, was a huge change from a normal Easter worship service. Debbie and I gathered for worship around our kitchen table and during the course of Easter worship the dogs were at the door wanting to go outside.

But really, is this Easter that much different from that first Sunday in Easter? In this morning's text we find the disciples in the evening of that first Easter huddled in fear behind locked doors. The text relates that they were huddled together in fear of the Jews. Maybe they were worried that those who killed Jesus would soon be after them, but there is really no evidence that anyone was planning to hunt them down. Any fears of arrest didn't stop some of those early disciples from running to the tomb and didn't stop them when they thought a grave robbery had happened.

Maybe they went to the room and locked the doors because they didn't want to deal with the scorn of those who knew that they had failed, they were ashamed of the way things turned out, or maybe they were afraid of running into Jesus himself. The last time that Peter spoke, he said that he would never deny Jesus and the rest of the disciples fell asleep when Jesus asked them to pray for him. Why didn't the disciples go look for Jesus? It just might be possible that they were afraid to find him! Our text begins with a group of disciples hunkered down behind locked doors, not gathered for fellowship or praise to God, but gathered out of fear.

That sounds like us, doesn't it? Here we were on Easter Sunday, locked in our homes and practicing "Sheltering in Place," for fear of the Covid-19 virus. There has been an onslaught of scary news lately. A person recently wrote, "I am scared. I don't want to be here. I want to be in lock-down at home, like my friends and neighbors and self-quarantine to protect myself and stay safe." That doesn't sound too much different from those first disciples on the evening of Easter Sunday.

But scripture doesn't end here. Jesus gets through those locked doors! It wasn't the Jews that were looking for the disciples, it was Jesus who had gone looking for them! Jesus comes back to them, to these disciples who betrayed him, forsook him, and fled into the darkness of the night when things got tough, and says to them, "Peace be with you." These are the first words that Jesus speaks on this side of the Resurrection. We know how important first words can be. Think of the excitement when a young child speaks her first word, or the first word a person you haven't spoken with in a long time. First words carry a lot of meaning. Jesus' first words to his disciples are important. "Peace be with you."

That night, no one behind those locked doors asked to be forgiven, nobody said to Jesus, “I am sorry or oops, we really let you down, or forgive us.” And yet Jesus says, “Peace be with you,” much like his words from the cross when he says, “Father forgive them...” I think Catholic moral theology specifies that in the dynamic of repentance, there needs to be an act of contrition. There is none of that here...only “Peace be with you.” These first words of Jesus, are words that we need to hear today. Not just because we are locked up behind closed door out of fear like those first disciples, but because there is a need to hear the Good New of Easter, that no matter how you have failed or if you are too ashamed or too paralyzed by the locks on the doors of your heart won’t stop Jesus. He will appear right in the middle of your locked-up heart and before you can even say something, he will say, “Peace be with you.”

And so, the account ends not with a command to unlock your door and to open the door to let Jesus into your life. No, this sermon ends with a promise that just as the risen Christ was not stopped by locked doors that the disciples hid behind, so the risen Christ will not be deterred by any locks that you have put on the doors to your heart.

God is wonderful, resourceful, imaginative, persistent and determined to have us even in our lostness, even in our betrayal and the first thing he does at Easter, is to come and get us. There is no defense against Jesus, there is no way to secure yourself.

“Peace be with you.”  
Jesus Christ is risen!

Amen.